

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGUI 01103 010758Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 CU-02 ISO-00 SCA-01 DHA-02 PM-04 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 AID-05 IO-13 /078 W
-----010800Z 018415 /10
R 311200Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8736

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: SCUL SGEN CT
SUBJ: BAPTISTS DECIDE TO STAY

REF: BANGUI 1029

1. TO THEIR GREAT SURPRISE AND DELIGHT THE BAPTIST MID MISSION FINDS ITSELF IN THE HAPPY POSITION OF BEING ABLE TO REMAIN IN THE CAE ON ITS OWN TERMS. ON MAY 28 THE HEAD OF THE MID MISSION, REV. KNUTE ORTON WAS RECEIVED BY THE INTERIOR MINISTER. THE MINISTER, SAID THAT IT WAS THE GOCAE'S DESIRE THAT THE MISSIONARIES REMAIN IN THE COUNTRY AND CONTINUE THEIR SOCIAL AND EVANGELICAL WORK AS IN THE PAST. THEY WOULD BE FREE TO OPERATE ENTIRELY INDEPENDENTLY AND NO NATIONAL ORGANIZATION WOULD BE IMPOSED ON THEM. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO AGREED TO AUTHORIZE THE MISSION TO HAVE ITS OWN PLANE BASED AT IPPY, AND A NETWORK OF RADIOS LINKING THE VARIOUS MISSION STATIONS.

2. THE MEETING WITH THE INTERIOR MINISTER FOLLOWED A SOMEWHAT CONFUSING ANNOUNCEMENT ON CENTRAL AFRICAN RADIO THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD DISSOLVED THE NATIONAL BAPTIST FEDERATION. IT WAS WIDELY ASSUMED BOTH IN BANGUI AND UP COUNTRY THAT THE MID MISSION WAS BEING THROWN OUT. IN FACT, THE ASSOCIATION WHICH WAS DISSOLVED WAS THAT OF THE DISSIDENT PASTORS CREATED TWO YEARS
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AGO AND AGAINST WHOM THE MID MISSION HAD BEEN FIGHTING. THE DISSOLUTION, WHICH PLEASES THE MID MISSION, WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY A RETURN OF SEIZED PROPERTY AT OUANGO AND BANGASSOU.

3. HAVING ACHIEVED ALL THEIR DEMANDS, THE BAPTISTS HAVE NOW DECIDED TO STAY. ONLY THREE FAMILIES, WHO HAD ALREADY DECIDED TO LEAVE THE FIELD, HAVE LEFT AND NO FURTHER WITHDRAWALS ARE

PLANNED; IN FACT, A MODEST EXPANSION OF BAPTIST ACTIVITIES WILL NOW TAKE PLACE.

4. COMMENT: IT IS NOT ALTOGETHER CLEAR WHY THE GOVERNMENT HAS COME DOWN SO FIRMLY ON THE BAPTISTS' SIDE. REPORTEDLY FORMER PRESIDENT DACKO INTERCEDED WITH THE EMPEROR ON THEIR BEHALF. THERE WAS PROBABLY SOME CONCERN AT THE POTENTIAL LOSS OF VALUABLE MEDICAL FACILITIES, WHICH WOULD HAVE COLLAPSED HAD THE BAPTISTS LEFT. FINALLY THE GOVERNMENT HAD APPARENTLY RECEIVED WORD THAT THE DISSIDENT PASTORS AT BANGASSOU HAD BEEN ORGANIZING ANTI-WHITE AND ANTI-MISSIONARY DEMONSTRATIONS. POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF THIS KIND IS ANATHEMA TO THE GOVERNMENT, AND IT UNDOUBTEDLY WANTED TO PREVENT ANY FURTHER ACTIVITIES OF THIS KIND.

5. ALTHOUGH THE MISSIONARIES HAVE WON A NOTABLE VICTORY AND NOW EVIDENTLY HAVE THE GOVERNMENT ON THEIR SIDE, THERE IS STILL SOME CAUSE FOR CONCERN. BOTH THE BANGUI PASTORS, WHO HAVE BEEN OVERRULED IN THEIR EFFORTS TO GET CONTROL OVER THE MISSIONARIES, AND THE DISSIDENTS IN BANGASSOU WILL BE BITTER AT THEIR DEFEAT. THEY WILL BE BIDDING THEIR TIME TO FIND NEW WAYS TO STRIKE AT THE MID MISSION'S ACTIVITIES. THE BAPTISTS REALIZE THEY ARE VULNERABLE TO CRITICISM ON A NUMBER OF POINTS AND NOW SAY THEY HAVE EVERY INTENTION OF ACCELERATING THE PACE OF AFRICANIZATION. IF THEY DO THEY WILL MINIMIZE THE LIKLIHOOD OF INCIDENTS IN THE FUTURE; IF NOT, THEIR VICTORY MAY TURN OUT TO BE EPHEMERAL.
QUAINTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHURCH STATE RELATIONS, MISSIONARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 31-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANGUI01103
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770194-0692
Format: TEL
From: BANGUI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977054/aaaaadcc.tel
Line Count: 88
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f0e8cc8f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BANGUI 1029
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2454471
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BAPTISTS DECIDE TO STAY
TAGS: SCUL, SGEN, CT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f0e8cc8f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009